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ABSTRACT

A study explored the effect of drama on the writing development of adolescents in four Toronto (Canada) schools over a 6-month period using a naturalistic observation methodology. The range of schools and student groupings included: a grade 10 drama class in a collegiate institute; a grade 12/O.A.C. drama class in a technical-commercial school; and two grade 8 classes. Teachers were encouraged to plan opportunities for student writing as an intrinsic element in the students' drama work, and to focus on writing assignments and topics integral to the development of a drama theme. Data included teacher and student journals; video and audio recordings of classroom work; and video and audio recordings of post-work interviews including students and teachers. Results indicated that: (1) there was a small but significant increase in students' already fairly positive writing attitudes; (2) students at all levels of ability responded positively to the relationship between drama and writing; (3) a majority of students agreed that integrated writing and drama were mutually reinforcing; (4) the drama and writing activities provided many students with enhanced empathy and understanding for a broad range of people; and (5) student writing tended to concentrate on personal and reflective writing. Findings suggest a very high degree of articulateness and awareness of the processes of learning and teaching among the teachers and students involved. Two tables of data are included. (Contains 74 references.) (RS)

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WRITING IN IMAGINED CONTEXTS:

RESEARCH INTO DRAMA-INFLUENCED WRITING

FEBRUARY, 1993

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Also, to Chuck Lundy and the student teacher mentors from the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto who participated in the project.

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I. BACKGROUND, RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1. **Locale: The schools and the teachers.**

This report describes and analyses a drama and writing curriculum-related research project undertaken in four Toronto schools between January and June 1991. Four schools were selected to represent diverse social and cultural student groups. The range of schools and student groupings included:

- a grade 10 Drama class in a collegiate institute
- a grade 12/O.A.C. Drama class in a technical-commercial school
- a grade 8 class in an elementary school where students spend the majority of their time with one teacher
- a grade 8 class in an elementary school where students move from subject specialist to subject specialist.

The teachers and schools involved in the project volunteered to monitor and record the drama and writing activity done by their classes during the sessions. All of the teachers involved had prior experience as teachers of drama and expressed interest in increasing the opportunities for introducing writing assignments as part of the drama curriculum. The student cohort represented a wide range of achievement levels and included a significant number of ESL students.

1.2. **Rationale and expectations**

The explicit goal for the project was to: "explore the effect of drama on the writing development of adolescents over a six month period".

Possible effects were anticipated in: students' motivation to write, their attitude to writing, and in the quality of their writing as articulate, emotionally expressive, and demonstrative of empathy. Drama's potential as a stimulus to both cognitive and affective development, as manifest in students' writing, is the focus of the discussion in chapters 3 and 4.

The naturalistic observation methodology of the project was not designed primarily to provide statistical evidence that drama improves the standard of writing. It was designed to generate hypotheses, rather than to test them, to provide a framework for exploring the effects of drama on student motivation and attitudes, and to provide evidence of significant points of contact between the two symbolic processes of writing and drama.

Drama, in this context, signifies a process and content which are based on role-play and improvisation, not presentation of published scripts.

1.3 Resources

In addition to regular timetabled sessions led by the teacher, each school was supported in various ways by a range of external agencies involved in the project:

- visits by the Assistant Co-ordinator of Drama for the Toronto Board of Education, who contributed to the classroom teaching, called meetings, planned and reviewed the progress of the project, and video-taped the work of the class;
- visits by lecturers and student-teachers from the Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, who contributed to the teaching, made detailed observations, organized seminars for the school-based teachers, and participated in the planning and reviewing of class work;
- visits by the external assessor from the University of Warwick, England, who contributed to the teaching of each class, held one-on-one meetings to review progress, and conducted detailed interviews with groups of students and the teachers.

1.4 Writing genres to be included

The briefing for the project encouraged project teachers to plan opportunities for student writing as an intrinsic element in the students' drama work, and to focus on writing assignments and topics integral to the development of a drama theme. Project teachers were asked to be conscious of a range of written genres in which students might be asked to respond over the duration of the project: narrative, poetry, script, reflection, information, persuasion, and argument. In selecting these genre categories the project team was mindful of two influences:

- research which indicates that many students at grade 8 and 12 have difficulty in writing effective argumentative discourse, despite the centrality of this form of discourse to personal and commercial life (Pringle and Freedman 1985);
- emerging theories of writing development which suggest that the various generic forms are distinctive forms of discourse whose conventions need to be explicitly, and separately, taught to students.

1.5 Documentation

A variety of methods of recording the work of the project was used, including: teacher and student journals; video and audio recordings of classroom work; video and audio recordings of post-work interviews including students and teachers, and photocopies of student writing contained in individual, accumulative folders. In addition, other sources of data for the project included: samples of pre-project, non-drama writing from each student; pre- and post-project questionnaires designed to reveal attitudes to writing, and individual student inventories describing background and previous experience with drama and written composition. All of these data collection tools yielded information about and illustrations of the effects of drama on students' writing.

1.6 Topics which formed the basis of the drama-writing unit.

The range of topics covered by the classes involved in the project included: the experience of new immigrants coming to Canada; a story drama based on The Orphan Boy by Tololwa M. Mollel; an examination of the implications of working within an historical setting with a mythical tale, and an exploration of the problems of loneliness and old-age. The following summaries briefly outline the series of lessons that emerged over time in the classrooms.

Student Voices

The Family Heirloom

We are worn with honour and dignity. We are kept with pride. We are set aside with reverence and looked upon with awe. We lay within a deep brown wooden frame and are pinned upon the darkest black velvet. We are two-faced. Our outside appearance is shiny, bold and almost impersonal. Yet, on the other side, the side that very few see, are our inscriptions. We are dedicated, loyal and true to one man only, showing our respect to only him. "With honour and respect, to Sergeant Delaney, 1914." "Presented to Sergeant Delaney in honour of his bravery and courage. 1914"

We are handled rarely but shined and polished often, and we are displayed with shades of happiness, joy and sweet-sorrow. We will always remember and we will always be remembered.

We are ... the Medals.

a) Grade 10

In the immigration drama, students began by discussing reasons for immigration to Canada, many offering specific reasons coming from personal experience. Students were asked to complete research interviews with family and friends in order to gather data and anecdotes regarding the issues and reasons around emigration, including: preparations for the journey, the journey itself, arrival in the new land, and life in the new community. Students then used the material they had collected to compose excerpts of family stories which were shared out loud, discussed and re-enacted in group role-play. In order to establish a "family" bond, each group was given a "family heirloom" and asked to compose a story encompassing the history of this heirloom and its value to the family.

As immigration to Canada was discussed within each family group, structured decision-making and formal group writing became part of the drama, in order for the family to present their desire to immigrate to Canada to the Canadian consul and to acquire the appropriate documentation. The drama developed further as the families made their preparations to leave the homeland, endured the hardships of the journey, and took steps to forge a new life in their new country, discussing and documenting in journals all of the joys and sorrows this course of action had brought to the family group.

b) Grade 8

In the story drama based on The Orphan Boy, the students were asked to adopt the roles of stars who had gone down to earth to help individuals who were in trouble. Each of them shared their experience, whether positive or a negative, with a partner. The teacher went into role as one of the chief stars in the constellation and interviewed each of the students in role to find out what had happened on their journeys to Earth.

In the story, Kiliken, a character from The Orphan Boy, was the last of the constellations to visit the Earth world, after which the stars would remain forever in the sky looking down on the Earth and its inhabitants but being unable to interact with them. The stars were required to prepare a welcoming back ceremony for Kiliken, to be followed immediately by the signing of the commitment never to return to Earth.

The class was split into groups and asked to prepare the ceremony. One of the groups prepared a chant to welcome him back; another was asked to present him with his robe of return; another prepared a house for his return that would contain all that he would need to recover from his journey, and the final group prepared the contract that Kiliken would have to sign to agree never to return to the Earth world.

When all the groups were ready, a student in role as Kiliken entered, was greeted by the various groups, and the ceremony was enacted. The drama then centred on the group's attempts to convince a reluctant Kiliken to sign the contract. The arguments used by the groups were based on the stories that they had told of their own experiences on visits to Earth in the early stages of the drama.

c) Grade 8

The source for the drama was based on the Kevin Crossley-Holland version of "The Wild Man," an ancient legend from East Anglia. According to the Chronicum Anglicum: "A merman was caught at Orford in Suffolk during the reign of Henry II (1154- 1189). He was imprisoned in the newly built castle, did not recognize the cross, did not talk despite torture, returned voluntarily into captivity having eluded three rows of nets, and then disappeared never to be seen again."

The purpose of the drama was to use this fragment of a narrative as a starting point for the students to construct their own shared development of the story. They were not bound to the Crossley-Holland version. They were encouraged to collaborate in making a class story through drama.

The class was asked to imagine that their village was the village in which, according to the Chronicum, the merman appeared: Orford in Suffolk. They were invited to choose the roles of five people connected with the events at Orford--priest, lord, fishcatcher, guard, etc. Volunteers took on these roles and were asked questions by the class about what had happened. Each role player had the chance to build and develop the story without contradicting developments offered by the other roles.

With the teacher also in role, the class re-enacted what they considered to be the crucial scenes from the story as a means of discovering, through improvisation, what might have been said and done. The class worked on the scene where the merman is first brought ashore by the fishcatchers; how would the villagers react? Who would they fetch first, the lord or the priest? These improvisations were slowly and carefully built so that the class had the chance to consider the detail and the implications of their actions. 16

Student Voices

In my dreams last night I was a camera. I filmed Mrs. Delaney's room. It was plain, yet elegant, with flowers and empty perfume bottles, showing sentimentality and a quaint side to Bridgette. First, I viewed her bed. It was small with a limp pillow laying on it. There was a patchwork quilt covering the sheet, but here and there the sheet peeked out, a ragged edge. Sitting on the pillow was a very ragged and careworn teddy bear with one missing eye, a chewed nose and a scraggly ear. Some of the fur was missing. Right beside the bed was a pair of pink fuzzy slippers. Adjacent to the bed was a dresser. It was relatively tall with a large, dusty mirror on it. There were six drawers altogether, and the top row had two small drawers instead of one large one. It had old, rusty handles, and the white paint was cracking and peeling off. On top of the dresser there were perfume bottles of all kinds, standing on a crocheted lace cloth. Off to one side was a vase of flowers. There was small change lying around.

And finally, next to the window, was a small table and chair. They were a deep mahogany brown. The chair was high-backed with a bit of padding on the seat, but the stuffing was coming out, because it was very worn. The back of the chair was hardwood, carved into a design. The table was small and cluttered. On it was another vase with flowers, a small photo album, an old black patent leather purse, some stationary with letter-writing materials on it, and a beautifully leather-bound, gold leaf bible. It was very old. The binding was cracked and ragged; not very pretty to look at. But the inside was beautiful. The first few pages contained the family history, hand-written in graceful calligraphy. The Bible's pages were care-worn in some places but were well loved. I then turned to the old wooden door of her room and left.

When I woke, the image of the Bible flashed back to me. Very old and worn on the outside but very beautiful on the inside. It represented the simple beauty and grace of Mrs. Delaney.

<u>Haiku</u>

Overwhelming thoughts
Memories filling the room
Family reunion.

Mysterious old
Containing past shadow lives
Up in the attic.

d) Grade 12 - O.A.C.

The drama started from a textbook source. The objective in using the Mrs. Delaney excerpt for drama was to explore the problems of loneliness and old age, why some seniors die alone, apparently uncared for. The teacher's purpose in choosing this dramatic theme was to explore this source and work with the students to show that they need to question their assumptions and stereotypes about older people and their families.

In order to find out what happened in Mrs. Delaney's life, the class went into role as members of a community group looking at the problems of "the elderly". They interviewed five people who might give some insight about Mrs. Delaney's situation and, based on the information, the students (in role) decided to write to Mrs. Delaney.

They also decided to go back in time to explore the life of Mrs. Delaney's daughter, Maureen, to try and find out why she had broken contact with her mother and what happened in their relationship for this to have happened. Although there were many important moments in the drama, one in particular occurred when Maureen made the decision to leave her own daughter who was seriously ill to return to England and see her mother. She was met at the airport by one of the members of the Community Committee, after which she visited her mother's home and discovered an old trunk that contained clues to what happened in their relationship.

Using a variety of different dramatic conventions and writing modes to explore the problems that Mrs. Delaney and Maureen had in their past relationship, the students gained a clearer understanding of how difficult their choices were, and by extension, that it is hard to make choices in our own lives.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Results of empirical research

Wagner (1988), reviewing the literature, finds that convincing empirical research to support the general claims for the effectiveness of drama in language and literacy development is sparse, and many of the existing studies are not comparable, or are faulty in method (Galda 1984). In preparation for a longitudinal study of children and drama, Collins (1985) surveyed 55 empirical studies, 46 of which assessed drama's effect on other attitudes and skills. He too concluded that one cannot generalize confidently from these studies. Moreover, no replication studies clearly confirm earlier findings.

Only five studies test the claim that drama improves writing: Pellegrini (1984), Roubick (1983), Wagner (1986), Ridel (1973), and Troyka (1973). All five find positive assertations between dramatic activity and written language development in classroom settings. Pellegrini showed a significant correlation between drama and word- writing fluency in kindergarten children. Roubicek found that children in Grade 5 scored significantly higher on the Diederich Writing Assessment Scale when offered drama as an alternative to structured discussion as a pre-writing activity. Wagner found that role-play with Grade 8 students had a significant effect on the development of persuasive writing. Ridel showed that Grade 9 students write more creative stories after a drama program based on theatre games, and Troyka found that the persuasive writing of first year college students was improved by drama opportunities.

2.2 Drama and literacy

Despite the paucity of empirical studies, drama is frequently advocated as a strategy for developing literacy by influential Language Arts theorists (Barnes, 1968; Britton, 1970; Britton et al, 1975; Creber, 1965; Dixon, 1975; Heathcote, 1981; Moffett and Wagner, 1983). The theoretical assertion of drama's role in the development of literacy is echoed in several Ontario Ministry of Education guidelines.

The advocacy for drama as a significant learning activity in literacy development is founded on the work of seminal theorists in cognitive psychology, in particular Piaget (1962) and Vygotsky (1967) who laid the theoretical foundation for the relationship between imaginative role-taking and play, and the development of literacy. Piaget showed that children use play to learn to separate the signifier from the signified, to attach meanings to symbols and to use real life experiences in order to engage in object substitutions and decontextualized behaviour. Vygotsky saw play as an induction into symbol manipulation. Indeed it is Vygotsky (1978) who provides the theoretical foundation for the assumed kinship between gesture and writing -- both are accomplished with the hands, and, for each, their significance lies in their symbolic value. Emig (1978) has suggested that writing may be closer to gesture than to speech, and subsequent studies in emergent literacy (Calkins, 1980; Cioffi, 1984; Dyson, 1981, 1986; Graves, 1979, 1982, 1983; and Harste, Woodward and Burke, 1984) have shown that children assign a multi-modal quality, usually associated with gesture and graphics, to their early writings. These findings support Pellegrini's suggestion that both play and word writing "may be related to the child's general representational competence" (1984, p.276). Pellegrini's own findings led him to suggest that play is a powerful predictor of kindergarten writing achievement, for when children engage in play, they are representing their ideas just as they are when writing their thoughts and feelings. Both activities involve the use of symbol systems, and thus the fundamental connection between writing and drama becomes clear.

Monson (1986) has described several ways in which drama is an effective pre-writing strategy, immersing children in experiences and clarifying concepts they may later explore through writing. Many observations, such as those of the Plowden Report (1967) on British schools, attest to the effect of drama on writing. British examiners commented, "What is most remarkable now in many infant schools is the variety of writing: writing rising out of dramatic play." (p. 218).

2.3 Differences between speaking and writing

There is a particularly significant thread in Vygotsky's research into the development of young children as writers, which is relevant to the purpose of this project (Britton, 1983). It is a thread which has often been ignored in later research and theory, and affects a common assumption about the development of literacy -- which suggests that development in oracy is the pre-requisite for developing reading and writing skills (Goodman and Goodman, 1979; Goodman, 1985, 1986; Wells, 1981, 1985; Booth and Thornley-Hall, 1991). Within this view of literacy, drama has been seen as being important because it has been considered, primarily, as an oral/aural form.

In fact, Vygotsky (1978) drew an important distinction between the development of spoken and written language: "our investigation has shown that the development of writing does not repeat the developmental history of speaking. Written speech is a separate linguistic function, differing from oral speech in both structure and mode of functioning". Vygotsky identifies four stages in the development of writing which have a particular significance for the symbolic, rather than oral/aural, nature of drama:

1. The use of gesture and visual signs - "the initial visual sign that contains the child's future writing as an acorn contains a future oak".

2. The use of symbolism in play - increasingly stable meanings assigned to play objects pave the way for "the deliberate structuring of the web of meaning".

3. The use of symbolism in drawing - the child must "make a basic discovery - namely that s/he can draw not only things but also speech".

4. The use of symbolism in writing - the movement from immediacy and intimacy of meaning in speech towards constancy of meaning in writing.

It may be a giant leap to suggest that because play, as an active symbolic process, is so important to the development of writing in the early years of a child's life it continues, in the form of drama, to enhance the development of writing as the student progresses into adolescence. This project cannot test this hypothesis in empirical terms, but it is clear from the anecdotal observations of all involved (see chapter 4) that students continue to relate to the symbolic visual/spatial nature of drama, as much as to the aural/oral, when identifying the positive influences of drama on their writing. There is clinical evidence from neuro-psychology to support the notion that 'storying' continues into adulthood as a central characteristic of the human response to experience (Gregory, 1974; Wells, 1988).

2.4 The problem of contextualization in non-literary genres

Vygotsky (1971) has drawn attention to another aspect of children's development as young writers which has become significant to current research in linguistics. He found that there are crucial differences between the way stories are constructed and responded to, as opposed to the impersonal modes of factual and expository writing. Britton has referred to this problem as the problem of 'contextualization' (Britton et al, 1975). In non-literary discourse, students must learn to contextualize in piecemeal fashion, judging as they read what to accept for further consideration and what to reject, bridging what they accept with their own existing knowledge and opinion. In literary discourse the contextualization is global, something that is postponed until the unity and meaning of the story is secured.

The problem for students as writers of non-literary discourse is that they have to overcome obstacles which are not encountered in story writing (Britton 1983) -- they need to learn how to enmesh with the reader's state of knowledge, opinions, interests and they need to learn how to anticipate

and "play a role" in the "inner debate with the reader". In drama, non-literary discourse is constructed within the context of the "story" the students are enacting. There is the opportunity for the students to literally "play a role" and for the "inner debate" to become an open debate between role players.

There have been recent developments in the educational application of linguistics which advance understanding of the problem of "contextualization" and its relationship to writing in drama. These developments have occurred within the sub-field of genre theory. Genre is the term developed by Halliday to describe different kinds of writing that have different functions in written discourse and in society (Halliday, 1985; Halliday and Hasan, 1989).

Influential genre theorists in Australia have argued that schools fail working class and minority group children by not teaching them to write in "powerful" socially important genres (Martin and Rothery, 1980; Kress, 1982; Rothery, 1984). In other words, schools are said to disadvantage certain groups of students by an over-emphasis on story and poetry writing, at the expense of time spent on teaching the impersonal genres of factual and expository prose. These concerns are also to be found in recent research commissioned by the Toronto School Board (Pringle and Freedman, 1985).

According to Kress, Rothery, and others, each genre has to be specifically taught in terms of the contextual conventions of the text. The problem is that the children who most need to acquire powerful use of impersonal genres are often those who are most removed from personal experience of the genre. If learning to write in a specific genre is about understanding the underlying context, audience, and purpose, then for many of these young people the context, audience, and purpose for writing a report or letter of complaint, for instance, may be very abstract and removed from their own immediate experience. As Margaret Donaldson (1978) has demonstrated in her research into cognitive development: "It is when we are dealing with people and things in the context of fairly immediate goals and intentions and familiar patterns of events that we feel most at home. And when we are asked to reason about these things, even verbally and at some remove, we can often do it well."

Genre theory poses the pedagogic problem of how to make the audience, context and purpose of a piece of writing personal enough to motivate the students to write in impersonal and non-literary genres. James Britton (1970) comments on this effect of educational drama: "A dramatic situation that really takes hold in a group propels the members of it more forcibly out of their own skins into somebody else's than any other form of representation. ... drama is a special form of talking and doing ... as a way of dealing with other times and places it is, as we have seen, more accessible than narration .... in drama the situations and the actions within it are themselves represented, and the speech thus remains embedded, in contexts".

Involvement and identification with the tensions in a drama may ensure that reports and letters will be more effectively written in terms of consideration of context, audience and purpose. Harold Rosen has drawn attention to this intimate relationship between language and context: "The social context, as we call it, is not an arena in which we perform our dramas. It is the dramas themselves; people in action with each other and against each other, improvising the text as they proceed." (Rosen, 1975).

III. MAKING THE DRAMA/WRITING CONNECTION

3.1. Drama and writing: complementary meaning-making activities

The concrete contextual framework provided by dramatic situations can both encourage and enable students to compose and transcribe for authentic reasons. The discussions and reflections arising from the possibilities and explorations within imagined and felt situations can lead to a variety of written activities. As well, many of the conventions of drama can transpose into literary conventions:

- a town meeting can result in a transcript;
- a witness can create a monologue;
- an incident can become descriptive writing.

Writing generated in response to the concrete particulars of context can lead to an awareness of the genre, register and audience, since the authentic situations of drama provide opportunities for students to experience the cause and effect of their personal writing. Role-taking allows the students to become the audience for their own writing, to dramatically experience the power of writer and audience. Working "in role" provides authentic reasons for shaping the writing, the voice used and the intended reception by the reader. The drama recreates a range of registers from the vernacular through the culturally-specific to the poetic. It draws attention to the act of writing as a significant human behaviour. The process of writing can be seen in the context of concrete human situations, not only as classroom practice. The relationship of talk and writing is emphasized, with language experienced as a whole.

Both drama and writing are acts of composition. All of the elements of re-ordering, referring, re-using, and editing can be found in each. Drama can reveal the consequences of writing in real-life settings, so that the meaning-making experiences in drama demand care and clarity from the writing. The quality of the drama is both determined and enhanced by the writing done in the context of the learning-in-action. For example, print-determined skills (e.g. proofreading, layout, typography) are the outgrowths of actual editing performed by authentic proof-readers engaged in simulation.

Student Voices

Dear Ms. Delaney,

I am writing in regards to your mother Mrs. Bridgette Delaney, on behalf of a local Committee concerned about the living conditions of the elderly. It seems that Mrs. B. Delaney is living in the attic of her house under very poor conditions. The larger and better rooms are being rented out mostly by college students. Unfortunately, these borders do not help matters at all, since many of them don't pay rent, nor do they help out around the house.

The stairs leading to Mrs. Delaney's room are dark, old and rickety, and at one point, the bannister is broken and is a hazard. Mrs. Delaney's room is very small and stuffy and lacks a telephone.

We, the committee, are very concerned for the welfare of Mrs. Delaney, as there is no one to help her, check up on her or remind her to do some very basic but important things -- such as taking her prescriptions, cleaning up spilt milk, and in general, remembering to take care of herself.

We are trying to find a way to aid your mother and we were wondering if you could help us in this matter. Perhaps you could help fund a cleaning person or a family aide, or perhaps you could persuade your mother to enter a nursing home or something along those lines. Mrs. Delaney is 87 now and needs help.

This brings us to another subject. (We are not meaning to pry, but we would like to understand the situation a little better.) Do you know the living conditions of your mother? If so, why haven't you done something about them, since they are quite dangerous? Is there

As well, reflective writing that grows from the drama (journals, letters, carry-over into other curricular areas) can benefit from the feeling/thought dynamic that is the heart of honest role playing. Actual emotional response can provide a special stimulus for a student's private writing.

The best language work grows over an extended period of time (Graves, 1983), during which children have time and incentive to work their way in: to refocus, change direction and edit, and to present their creations to others. What may make a difference in the writing is the experience of the drama itself (Wagner, 1985). Drama is an art form that happens in reality as it progresses in fiction, a process similar to composing in writing. When children move into story writing, still basing their ideas on firsthand experience in their drama-lives, they imagine themselves as other people, stepping into different shoes, thinking other people's thoughts, feeling their responses. The children are responsible for what happens and, by working in role, they are attempting to change perspective and move into inventive worlds and unfamiliar contexts. They build an imaginary world and become involved in what they are creating.

With drama, teachers can help children tap resources in language and imagination that they may not realize they have. As students work with problems and conflicts that they invent or meet in the drama, they begin to view the situation outside themselves, looking at the consequences of actions they have begun and reflecting on the lives and events of the characters they are creating. The students can use their imaginations to journey further into the situation and let the meanings that accrue in the drama reveal themselves in their writings. As they try for a more complex understanding of what is happening in the drama, their writing becomes more complex and their language deepens.

Today's writing curricula stress the active use of writing rather than exercises about the act of writing. Traditional motivations for writing deal with the completing of writing tasks. However, when the writing is embedded in a context that has a personal significance for the writer, the motivation for writing changes drastically. From within a drama context, the writer works in a feeling/thought mode, exploring meaning through both content and form, learning through the writing, just as s/he explores and learns

a reason for your absence from your rapidly aging and near-senile mother? Are you able to come and help out yourself?

Again, we mean no malice or insult with these questions, but we would like to get to the core of the matter, so to speak.

If you could reply to this letter as soon as possible, it would be greatly appreciated.

On behalf of the Committee,

Sincerely,

Beatrice MacAllister

through the drama (Heathcote in Fleming, 1982). The exploration and the learning become the motivation for the writing; the writing is more than just the means to the end. If children are engaged in the expressive and reflective aspects of drama, the writing that accompanies the drama --writing that grows out of the drama and writing engendered by the drama-- may possess the same characteristics and qualities of expression and reflection. Because writing may be used within the drama and may be read or listened to by others, proofreading and editing become part of the process and not simply an additional task.

The context of the drama lesson can provide an embedded and meaningful resource for all aspects of the writing process. Drama can act as a strong pre-writing activity, providing a link between speech and writing, stimulating children to write, either in-role as a character in the drama, or after the drama in appraisal of or reflection upon the experience. Writing within drama, students can explore and employ many strategies --free writing, journals, letters, collaborative writing, interviews, brainstorming, lists and so on. Writing for the drama can be done in the form of research and background writing as planning and preparation for the drama or to find new directions as the drama develops (Tarlington, 1985).

As children begin to think of themselves as writers, controlling the medium in order to find a way to say what they want to say to people they want to reach, the writing process becomes a language form whereby engaged writer/participants embody their feelings and ideas, learning not only to express themselves but to rethink, reassess, restructure and re-examine themselves in the light of their own growth, and in the light of the needs and requirements of their reading audience. Writing in role or as a result of having been in role lets children enter a new set of attitudes and feelings, while at the same time keeping their own in mind.

If the goals of developmental drama are complementary to those of expressive, interactive and poetic writing (Britton, 1970), there will be carryover from the drama to the writing, both in the freedom to create through interaction and in the use of forms to express ideas and feelings. The imaginative involvement that arises in drama can be a powerful stimulus for writing.

Student Voices

Telephone Call

When Maureen got home from work that night, her mind was full of doubt. There were so many questions and not enough answers. Was this really worth it? Would her daughter, Joan, help her? Would she understand? And what was Maureen going to do when, or if, she ever got to England? Maureen was confused, but she would not back out of it. She would not give up so soon.

With resolution, Maureen picked up the phone and called her daughter. She did not try to wheedle or beg. She did not try to sound pathetic or desperate; she just presented the facts and told her story bluntly.

A moment passed.

Two moments.

Joan was unsure. She had her career ahead of her and she hated factories. She had never met this grandmother of hers and she didn't know anything about her except that her mother never talked to her and that she was family. Yet she was family. And her mother needed help. She agreed to work for her mother.

Maureen was overjoyed and very relieved. She knew her daughter would come through for her. She always did.

3.2. Role-play and children's writing: the affective component

Writing in role is a very different writing experience, and it has many inherent advantages. There is a sense of purpose in role-driven writing that is peculiar and powerful. The presence of an audience, albeit a fictional one, is strongly felt. There is persuasive evidence that talk which precedes the writing is instrumental in putting children at ease with the writing process itself, as well as helping to provide the creative energy necessary for good writing. Talk, or, more precisely, drama talk creates a context from which stories can emerge comfortably and meaning can be created easily. The drama enables students to find their "voice" as writers while talking. The writing, then, is no longer an isolated task, but an extension of the whole experience.

As Dorothy Heathcote says, role-driven writing is truly a "high quality endeavour." The experience is genuine and filled with meaning. Feelings are allowed to emerge safely, and opinions are respected. Most important, the children sense that they matter as authentic language users. By the time pen is put to paper, they really write their own stories. They have been "living them" in the drama and the ideas come from themselves. They have thought the story through and looked at the characters from inside out. Consequently, they know exactly what they want to say, as well as how and why they want to say it. Tom Stabler (1978) notes: "Work in drama generally helps the written work of children -- for once they have fully identified with an experience they find it easier to write about their reactions to it. The thoughts and emotions aroused in the drama make their re-capture in words easier and the writing produced is vital and interesting."

Drama, then, provides a vital link between story and writing. Maintaining a role from within the drama while writing can be viewed as extending this link.

Drama encourages risk-taking. Role-driven writing does the same. For children who are able to write comfortably for the first time as a result of using drama and writing, the benefits are far- reaching. The benefit to extremely quiet students is also great. Writing in role provides them with the opportunity to respond in the voice of the role, taking the risk of speaking out, which they may find difficult in other circumstances. While writing in role, context, audience,

Student Voices

Dear Mum

By now I know you're wondering why I told you not to open this letter until you were on the plane. Our relationship means a lot to me and it would hurt me very much to see it destroyed in any way. You're probably wondering how it's going. Well, nothing's changed. For the moment my condition has been stabilized. Leaving to go and help your mother was the best decision you could have made. You've always been there for me when I needed you and you've helped me through the rough times. Your mother is in a difficult position and I know if I were in your position I would do the same thing. This trip is not only important for your mother's sake but also for you. In the past you have had problems. This is a way for you and her to mend those wounds. I know you would regret it if she died without at least working out your differences. I know you are worried about me, but I'll be fine. There's nothing to worry about and maybe one day I'll get to know my grandmother. But until then I want you to do the best you can for her. It's not right for a mother and daughter to be separated this way. I hope you write when you get there. I'll be expecting a letter. And once again don't worry, I'll be fine.

Love Katie

and purpose are loosely prescribed. Within that framework there is a tremendous amount of freedom -- freedom to role-play, to think and to create. (Mackay, 1992)

Providing a role often ignites the interest and awakens the imagination of the students. Writing in role provides a necessary outlet for their responses as the experience of drama touches them affectively, creatively and intellectually. "In regular writing you can't spread your feelings (Mackay, 1992)." The importance of allowing children the time to think, react and let their imaginations soar cannot be overlooked. Perhaps, this, more than anything is an essential ingredient to worthwhile, genuine writing. Often, children in school are not given the time to hypothesize, to talk themselves into understanding, to "think aloud." Douglas Barnes (1976) calls this groping towards meaning "exploratory talk."

Role invites the student to get over the hurdle of the blank page, to take the risk of putting pen to paper. Students become so eager to get their ideas down, they are barely aware that they are writing. They are inside their own stories, moving forward as they write in role. With wisdom, Lucy Calkins (1989) reminds teachers:

"If our teaching is to be an art we must remember that it is not the number of good ideas that turns our teaching into an art, but the selection, balance and design of those ideas ... To teach well we do not need more techniques, activities and strategies. We need a sense of what is essential."

Student Voices*(Students as teachers)**

Looking at ourselves as teachers with the younger classes, what we did helped them get into writing by giving them the experience of being in role --it's really meaningful being in role, as if they have to read a story and do some writing about it, but in this case we were the text, but they were the story. We were the text, rather than reading a book, we were there. It makes it easier to take the story in because it's more human. If somebody in the drama is crying, then they feel it. They might not have the chance to express their opinion in words, so then they write it down. So they're writing it down but they don't realize they're actually presenting themselves on paper. You see a person there, you can relate to her. When a person's just reading, there's not much emotional depth .

The kids we worked with - when they wrote, what they were principally interested in doing was responding to the person, and they were less conscious of doing a piece of written work --they didn't realize they were writing, but they were. It's less artificial than saying "I want you to write a letter to somebody you feel sorry about."

3.3 Drama as a process: the role of the teacher

The role of teacher intervention in the drama process used in this project has been informed by the understanding developed by teachers who work with the writing process in schools, who have articulated the case for teacher intervention in young people's creative processes.

Until recently, much writing in schools was product-centred, driven by a stimulus/response model of learning. Young writers were offered a title, a poem, or a narrative extract, and then expected to produce pieces of writing on their own. The product of their writing was then submitted for marking by the teacher, the supposition being that mistakes identified in the final product would not be repeated in subsequent assignments, even if these future assignments bore no relation in form or content to the previous submission.

This model of learning is not unlike a familiar drama model whereby groups are presented with some form of stimulus for improvising a "play" as a response. These are then performed as final products, and subjected to the critical scrutiny of the teacher and others.

However, many teachers became very dissatisfied with the results of the stimulus/response model as a model for the development of children's writing. They were encouraged to look for alternatives by the research and writing of practitioners/theorists such as Donald Graves, who were achieving remarkable results with a process-centred model for writing that has become known as the "editing and drafting" model. In this model the process of composing and executing a piece of writing is seen as being, in many ways, more significant in learning terms than considering only the final product -- the premise being that learning about the process of writing as it is being experienced is more rewarding than attempting to learn from mistakes made in the final product, particularly as most young writers were shown to be unaware of the causes of those mistakes and the ways in which they could be avoided. The process model focuses on the making of meaning, and identifies and modifies errors early in the process, so that new learning can be incorporated into the on-going process.

*The older students spent several class periods with the grade 8 students, and interacted as actors and as facilitators.

Student Voices *(students as teachers)*

It's a good way to get young kids to think about difficult questions. Kids learn more from this way of working than from others. When we practised our stories, we practised with each other and we had a good response, but when your're telling it to the kids as audience, you don't know how they're going to respond, or what they're going to say. With the first group it worked out okay, but they were sort of fidgety, so what I decided to do to get their attention was to assign them names, to put them in role. This is something I just thought of because I had to get their attention. I was telling my story and assigned them names, and I noticed as soon as I did that they really focused and they felt that they were that person.

Another difference when we are in the text and we are engaging people face to face in a drama situation is that you can answer their questions. If they're reading a book and have questions about it they can't just ask the book, they just have to keep reading and figure it out themselves. But if you're right there, they can ask "What about this? What about that?, and you can enlarge on it in the story, tell them more about that part of it, expand on it a little more than if they were just reading a book.

The methodology of the editing and drafting process is characterized by teacher intervention at every stage in the writing -- from decisions about what to say, through various drafts, to decisions about whom the writing is intended for and how it will be presented to the chosen audience. The purpose of these interventions is to help young writers discover what they want to say and advise on the forms available for saying it. Rather than an indicator of failure or weakness, the final product becomes a sign of what a young writer has achieved through the writing process.

Dissatisfaction with the stimulus/response model in its application to drama has also been strongly felt. Without teacher intervention, groups tend to simply rehearse and perform a jumble of existing prejudices and assumptions, often expressed through stereotyped characters in cliched situations. Students learn very little about the content area of the improvisation or about the alternative forms of expression that could be employed. There is little metacognitive growth.

As with the process model for writing, a process model for drama calls for teacher intervention throughout the drama's development, so that new learning occurs as a direct result of the experience of the drama process rather than being limited to responses to a performance after the event.

In this view of drama there is a shift of emphasis away from drama as a form of self or group expression, towards a view of drama as a process for interpreting and making sense of new information and human experience. Through active involvement of teacher with students in situations that contain elements of surprise, human tensions, and challenges to existing understandings, drama offers new opportunities for understanding the human condition. Thus, the process model was the model of drama instruction which was most encouraged throughout this project.

Teacher Voices

I found, indeed I think I'm still finding, that many of them are not very reflective about their writing. They don't have a sense that writing is a vehicle for learning. For them it's teacher-driven.

I wrote within role. What I tried to do was, when they were in their role in their family and they were trying to get their letters together, to act as the helper of the village or the community. I wrote little notes and I left them in their folders, "What about this?" "Do you think you might want to add something?", etc. They'd come in the next day and open the folder .... It was side coaching through writing!

I got the sense when my students were writing in role, that the role took over, that that was what was most important.

I really found it useful as a vehicle for exploring and dealing with racism.

I was thinking of the drama we did when we visited an older class. The students told stories and my students had to choose one of the stories and then write in role about that particular story, become someone in that story. Some of them were really powerful, but there was one which just showed that the student who wrote had absolutely no empathy, no sympathy, no understanding, no compassion for the person in the story. And it came out in a way that, for me, was really frightening. I thought: "There's something that's really going on here."

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3.4 Teacher assumptions regarding drama methodology

The form of educational drama practised by the teachers involved in this project emphasizes that there is a range of signifiers available to young people when they make dramatic meanings. In addition to speech conventions, students are encouraged to use space, gesture, objects, costumes, light and sound sources, and physical setting in order to construct their meanings. The form of the work, also, often uses a familiar narrative structure in order to create metaphors which can continue to inform students beyond the immediate moment of their dramatic interaction. For example, the grade 10 students involved in the work on new immigrants were not content merely to converse in the roles of families, officials and others. They wanted to find and establish meanings which generalized, or crystallized, the immigrant experience in essence. They wanted to find symbols which would be recognized by others who had similar experiences -- they worked as writers might, rather than as mere role players.

Teacher Voices

A lot of the writing that we wrote was written to be read. Which is very exciting, because that's the whole concept of scripting, that we're reading aloud words others have written. Which is a very exciting reason for someone to write within the drama, whether they're going to dramatize the story or whether they're going to read it aloud it's a real reason for writing for other kids.

The drama methodology employed by the project teachers reflected a relatively homogeneous approach based on a shared view of theatre and its teaching applications. In group interviews the teachers expressed assumptions about theatre as an educational tool which can be summarized as follows:

- The teachers shared the philosophical view that theatre is not entirely the invention of artists, any more than literature or dance is. As Barbara Hardy has argued, artists develop human psychological processes which are in themselves "primary acts of mind" essential to human development and communication. "Narrative, like lyric or dance, is not to be regarded as an aesthetic invention used by artists to control, manipulate and order experience, but as a primary act of mind transferred to art from life." (Hardy, B. 1977)

Student Voices

Today we focused on Katie's dilemma. She has taken quite seriously ill and apparently has some sort of skin cancer. Maureen is now torn between her daughter and her mom.

We started off with someone taking on the role of Maureen and sitting on a chair. Everyone else stood behind Maureen, physically touching her in some way, and acted as though they were the arguments for and against Maureen's going to England for her mom or staying in Australia for her daughter.

I played the part of Maureen. At the end of this experiment, I had to make some sort of decision as to what I was going to do. At first it was quite one-sided; everyone wanted me to go to my mother. This made things very easy. Then the tables began to turn and I got more views on Kate's side. Finally someone asked, "Who's more important to you? You or your mother?" This caught me off guard but it was perfectly true. I mean, that's what it comes down to isn't it? My final decision was that I would wait until I know how bad Kate's sickness was, and in the meantime, I would write a letter to both my mom and the Committee.

Then we did a Hot Seat on Kate's doctor. I didn't have much to say because I only wanted to know a few things. Namely, what disease she had, how serious it was, and if it could be cured. Needless to say, my questions were answered.

In all, the thing I pondered the most was who was most important to Maureen at this moment: her mom or her daughter. Also, what her daughter's reaction was. In my case, family is family; there's no qualms about it. We are very much an (Irish) clan, and we stick together. This is what influenced my opinion on what I wanted to happen.

[You know, I have a feeling that any moment now, we're going to receive the news that Mrs. B. Delaney, age 88, has fallen down her stairs.]

- In this sense the 'art-form' of theatre was seen, by this group of teachers, as the conscious and aesthetic development of a primal symbolic process which has deep cultural origins. They expressed the view that they tried to give respect, value, and use a spectrum of forms, learning behaviours and cultural purposes which bridge the psychological, but still symbolic, play associated with childhood to the Play formally recreated for audiences. Theatre is the direct experience that is shared when people imagine and behave as if they were other then themselves in some other place at another time.

- The teachers expressed the view that learning in theatre occurred when there was a conscious realization of the relationship between **form** and **content**. Quite simply, what the drama is about is as important a consideration to these teachers as the form it takes. Drama only occurs when students experience the content and form together as one and when the art of theatre is felt within the context of the work being explored.

- It follows, therefore, that the teachers emphasize that there are two inter-related dimensions of learning available in any dramatic lesson: personal and social learning emerging from the collaborative nature of any drama enterprise and from the human and social content at its core, and aesthetic learning about the art form and how it can be, and is used to form meanings in theatre.

- The teachers believed that an education in theatre, as a meaning-making process with a wide range of cultural forms and purposes, should go beyond the consideration of literary text and mise-en-scene as the principle meaning-making devices used in theatre. Study should focus on the meaning-making uses of a broader range of theatrical signifiers in addition to text and direction -- time, space, action, objects, lights, sounds and cinematography. This range of signifiers is commonly used to make dramatic meanings in all forms of play.

Teacher Voices

About my own writing during the project, I tended to write more journal, day-to-day angst about what we did, what I should have done, that sort of thing. When I started to write I thought it was going to be far less personal and perhaps more what happened in the class, but actually what came out was far more of a personal journal – what I should remember to think about next time -- more of a prompt for me and more of a personal journey in my own learning process. When something happened, or something sparked, I tried writing reflectively on my process, and their process too.

Student Voices

Well, in Drama we learn to look at lots of other things, like the things around us (in role as character): what's the atmosphere in the room; what's the weather outside; what's the expression on other people's faces; what's the expression on my own face; how is the desk, what is the posture; other things, other than just the words and actions. You can connect everything -- the weather, the clothes that people are wearing, the music in the background, the smells....

You learn what situation they're in (a character), and how the people around them act, how this character tries to deal with the world.

When we're all together, we all have a multitude of ideas, and so, we get an idea from one person, an idea from another person, mix it in with our own idea, and we get these really great ideas.

If you do a drama, you're thrown right into it. You don't have any choice but to listen to what the other person's saying to you. You comprehend it because you have to work it out, and if you're working it out, then you obviously understand better.

You get a rounder perspective, a broader perspective.

It's more open and friendly, we can talk to each other about certain things without getting pressed down by the rest of the class. We're open to ideas, and we share ideas, and that's good because in other classes, other kids often don't want to hear your ideas. You keep all your ideas to yourself and you don't really understand and you can't improve, and you don't know what's right and what's wrong. In other classes you're not so self-aware, because you can't express yourself, but in this drama class we're pretty close as a group.

In practice, there were two striking features of the teaching methodology which may be unfamiliar to teachers without prior experience of educational drama:

- the teachers used a wide range of dramatic techniques in their work which together bridged relatively spontaneous improvisations (in which students created the drama out of the in-role interactions) with highly crafted and carefully prepared presentations (which emphasized the poetic and symbolic nature of the work)
- the teachers frequently entered into the drama work as 'characters' in the story, so that students were interacting with their teacher in the symbolic dimension of improvisations. This convention is referred to as 'teacher-in-role' and its effectiveness as a teaching strategy has been well documented elsewhere (Bolton 1989). By working in the drama the teachers found that they could influence the students perceptions in the following ways:

  - **define spatial and visual possibilities:** e.g., Work with the different effects of proximity and distance between talkers, use furniture to explore status relationships --sit behind a desk as a 'boss', for example, or exploit the differences between operating in one's own familiar territory or home as opposed to being confronted in official or alien spaces.

  - **model different uses of register, tone and grammar** and in so doing encourage students to try out unfamiliar registers or genres of language. The teachers involved in the project believe in the power of story and drama, and concurred that the proper way to teach impersonal genres is from within the fictional and personal. In that way, otherwise remote contexts, audiences and purposes can be re-created, built, fleshed out and designed by students in their drama work. The stories created by the students in their drama work were understood to have the potential for generating the need for a report, a letter or a factual summary of events to be written.

  - **reference significant aspects of the context in a reflective way:** e.g, "Perhaps she would have told us more if we had chosen somewhere less threatening to hold this meeting", or, "when we get to the factory owner's house, shall we knock at the front door, or go round to the kitchen as we have been told to?"

  - **challenge stereotypic expectations of the context:** e.g., "You seem surprised by my refusal. Did you assume I would give in to your wishes simply because I am a woman?", or, "Why do you assume that because we have not progressed in your Western terms, we have not progressed as a people?"

  - **encourage and support student participation in the improvisation:** e.g., "If you have something on your mind this is your chance to speak, I won't let them hurt you for speaking your mind", or, "There are voices here which are not getting a fair hearing; why don't you listen again to what has just been said?"

IV. WHAT WAS LEARNED

The data demonstrate a very high degree of articulateness and awareness of the processes of learning and teaching amongst the teachers and students involved. The interviews with students provide evidence that students in Toronto schools are involved in the planning and interpretation of their learning programmes, and that they are reflective and evaluative in their discourse about the aims and implications of the project. Correlations between different forms of data -- writing samples, interviews, records, questionnaires -- provide some interesting pointers to student attitudes to writing programmes, and to the potential of drama as a means of enhancing student writing. These relationships are described in this section under a number of key headings for ease of interpretation.

4.1 Effects of drama on students' attitudes to writing

A major goal of the program that has been described was to provide a context in which students would be motivated to write, would find writing relevant and important, and would develop, as a consequence, a greater willingness to write and more confidence in their ability as writers.

To measure, at least partially, the success of the program in achieving these outcomes for students, students were asked to respond to a set of statements reflecting their attitude to writing before and after the program.

The questionnaire included 20 items, of which 13 were positively scored, and seven negatively scored.

Items and responses are cited in Table 1.

Teacher Voices

I think when you allow the group to become the editors collectively, that really works well. They want to achieve a certain standard, and they become their own critics. And then, before they submit something, it goes through that whole group process of revision.

Table 1: Writing Attitude Survey

	Feb/March %	May/June %
1. I avoid writing. (-)	39	37
2. I look forward to writing down my ideas.	58	74
3. Writing helps me to think more clearly.	47	65
4. Writing helps me understand my own feelings.	47	55
5. Writing helps me share my ideas and feelings.	47	62
6. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on my composition. (-)	55	47
7. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. (-)	34	37
8. Writing helps me to show people that I know something.	53	56
9. I like to write down my ideas.	58	68
10. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas clearly in writing.	45	58
11. I like to have my friends read what I have written.	39	53
12. I'm nervous about writing. (-)	37	26
13. People seem to enjoy what I write.	45	37
14. I enjoy writing.	71	68
15. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly. (-)	47	42
16. People who write well are more influential.	54	50
17. I like seeing my thoughts on paper.	53	63
18. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience.	50	50
19. I don't think I write as well as most other people. (-)	63	50
20. I'm not good at writing. (-)	40	33

(-) = reverse scored

Student Voices

In English you're so worried about all these things; you want content, you need grammar, but in drama first it's the content, second you can go back and correct your spelling.

The difference between doing writing in drama, and doing writing in English is that in English they mostly give us topics, but when we're in drama we usually get to pick what we want to do. We just write what we feel like writing and just keep on writing. We tend to write more than in other classes.

In my English class we have this assignment where we have to write a letter, as if we were someone who was in a short story. Doing the same sort ofthing in drama I thought that there was much more feeling in it, since I had acted it out. And I'm sure if I thought back to English, if I thought that, "Okay, you think I'm this person and I'm writing to this other person, what would I feel," that would be different. It was the same assignment but two different approaches.

Although there were about 80 students enroled in the four classes, only about 38 were present at both the pre- and post-administration of the questionnaire. For these 38 students we compared the total score on the questionnaire at the two points in time, and found a significant increase in students' positive attitude to writing from month one to month four. Average total score at time one was 63.3, out of a maximum positive score of 100; at time two it was 65.8. This suggests that students had a fairly positive attitude to writing even before the program, and there was a small but significant increase in positive feeling to writing by the end of the four months. On 15 of the 20 items, responses were more positive after than before, in many cases showing substantial increases. The items that showed the most positive change indicate that students have learned to like to write their ideas more, to feel less nervous and more confident about their ability to write, and to better appreciate the potential for writing as a way to understand and share their feelings. These results are encouraging, and reinforce the students' and teachers' reports about the success of the experiment.

A majority of the students who were interviewed discussed the difference between the climate for writing in drama and in English classes. These comparisons were invariably focused upon student perceptions of the purposes for writing.

From the students' point of view, writing in English classes was dominated by the need for assessment and accuracy. The students felt they were writing to get marks rather than to say anything of any personal consequence. The emphasis on "writing process" was seen by some students to be a constraint in the sense that it concentrates on form without, in their view, much consideration of content. The students drew attention to writing programmes which deny students any choice of topic, which determine the structure and form of the response and which prohibit students from expressing personal opinions and emotions.

Conversely, the students were also critical of the lack of attention to accuracy and detail in relation to the assessment of writing done in drama. These observations lead to the suggestion to educators that professional development and curriculum planning opportunities be provided for teachers of English and Drama to work together towards a clearer mutual understanding of the writing process and the drama process, to the benefit of students and programs across both disciplines.

Teacher Voices

I had a lot of students, especially boys, for whom writing as a physical activity was exceedingly difficult. Their handwriting is really quite unbelievable. I found that with some of them, the hand skills got in the way [of their writing]. But the drama liberated them, because it seemed that what they wanted to say became much more important and they weren't worried as much that making this pen mark on the page is so difficult.

There's a whole world of difference in self-confidence that the drama and some of the writing through drama made in terms of the students. There are so many students who couldn't shine in terms of other kinds of writing, yet the writing through the drama really gave them better self esteem, and made them the centre of their groups at times.

Yes, that's exactly it. In talking to my students, they would say that whereas in English class they write from a very structured perspective -- they're not encouraged to write in first person ever, so therefore, they never really get their thoughts and feelings down on paper -- in drama they can do that. They can put down their thoughts and feelings, they can be the person in that situation.

Student Voices

Instead of just doing research and then trying to imagine a story based on that, doing drama using your research first makes story-writing more real. You can base it on the things that happened to you in drama, which are like the things that happen to you in life, and you're learning at the same time.

Sometimes everything just starts coming. The drama teacher will give you an assignment like, "Write your thoughts and feelings on the death of Mrs. Delaney." Then you sit down, you think, you write your name at the top of the page, you put the page down, and all of a sudden everything will just start, and your hand isn't moving fast enough to write it all down, and it ends up you're writing all these hackneyed sentences, some of them are in point form, and you think, "okay, well I've only got twenty seconds left, let's see if I can fix this up." And then you start, you get about a quarter of the way through, and then the teacher comes and collects your paper, and you think, "Oh well." If it had been in English class you would get maybe two out of ten, but since it's drama, as long as the right stuff is there you'll get, maybe, perfect!

In general students expressed the following views of the positive benefits of writing in drama:

- a more relaxed atmosphere free from the stress of close marking and rewriting
- more opportunities for personal response writing/ownership of topic
- writing assignments which are directly related to the context or narrative of the drama -- there is a clearer purpose for doing the writing
- more opportunity to collaborate on ideas and draw from other people's contributions to the drama
- the content of assignments is given equal weight with the form. Often self-esteem is enhanced when a piece of student writing becomes central to the development of a drama.
- written assignments completed out of class time give continuity to a drama theme -- the students stay in contact with the drama through their writing.

Teacher Voices

There's something about the whole thing of revising and editing. They move back from that. It's as if "If you want me to really look at that and make it like it's supposed to be in English, with the right verbs and things in the right place, then I don't own it any longer." It's this feeling of the imposed structure of revising and making it different that takes away the "me" from the work.

I found the kids with whom I worked were always anxious about having time, either at school or at home. When one loses the immediacy, it doesn't make sense a few days later.

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Student Voices

Teachers don't often tell you (unless you're in the enriched program) to write like this; "Oh just write a story about a guy and a woman who go off and do something, and do whatever you want." Before you took drama it was different. If you never took drama before and you're in English class you don't know what to write, but if you took drama it helps you, and you know that there are other ways to write.

Doing the drama first helps writing because, in drama you get to use a lot of your imaginaion, and so you're thinking for yourself, and so then when you go back into English class you can use what you've done in drama to help.

In English, normally the teacher will just say, "Okay, write about this ..." And if you want to put something else into the story, you can't. But with drama, you can use your whole imagination, you can put whatever you want into the story and it's yours. It's not the teacher's.

You get this feeling of writing; you want to express yourself, and you really want to get into this character, and you're going really deep into this character. And it's good. You don't get that same "wanting to write" in English.

Negative comments about writing in drama focused on:

- writing breaking the flow of the drama, getting in the way of the "action"
- concern about the amount of drama time taken up by writing
- too much teacher concentration on journal/personal response writing
- lack of dialogue and continuity between drama writing and writing done in English classes

The respondents represented a broad range of abilities both in terms of the ability to write well and in the ability to use English fluently. While all levels of ability responded positively to the relationship between drama and writing, there were several interesting indicators which differentiated responses according to ability.

Those students who are most challenged by writing responded particularly well to:

- the non-threatening, "can do", climate of the drama
- collaborating on ideas and acting out in groups
- being able to use objects and furniture to represent places and ideas before describing them in writing
- the story form of drama which held their interest
- the chance to "hot-seat" characters, i.e., to interview someone in role

In the middle range students responded particularly well to:

- the social realism of the theme and the form of the drama
- becoming emotionally engaged with the theme through the drama
- discovering more about a character or situation through taking part in improvisations
- negotiating first drafts for writing based on the experience of the drama
- personal response/journal writing which allows for subjective responses to the drama work

Teacher Voices

In collaborative writing, in some cases, we worked through to a revised draft. Again, I think it was a question of time. Going back, I would really take more time and allow that to happen.

Whether revision matters in drama depends on what you're trying to achieve. There were times when we did collaborative writing in a group, but often times the editing would be verbal editing. And then the final thing would be, "Okay, have we all agreed that we're going to put this down?"

The other thing that really made me question my evaluation in drama was one student I have who is very, very quiet, doesn't participate much in drama, but his understanding and knowledge and sensitivity of what has happened in the drama flowers in the writing.

Student Voices

As a result of working with drama my understanding of how a story is written, or how a story is made, or how a piece of writing works --just the way that writing is put together-- has changed. I tend to pay more attention to the human side now. Before I didn't put a lot of dialogue in my writing, and now I'm starting to include more, because I feel it's more important to get the reactions of the people as they respond to each other.

When we're writing we listen to things other people have said and borrow them, and everybody uses something different. It's partly to do with being able to take everybody else's ideas and put them together with our own. It's kind of like brainstorming. It makes the story a lot better.

The drama helps us with our writing. We get to find out how the character feels, things that we haven't thought of before. You get more to write about.

Those students who write well with ease responded particularly well to:

- looking for sub-text in the gestures and action of improvisation
- recognizing symbols and metaphors, and introducing them into the drama; being aware of the drama as a form of literary text open to crafting and interpretation (Esslin 1979, 1981)
- finding and using appropriate forms of discourse for writing based on the teacher's model of language used in the improvisation
- being interviewed by others in role as a way of stretching their own understanding of the character they are playing
- scripting scenes to be used in the drama, or having their writing used to further develop the drama.

If these general indicators are used to suggest a developmental pattern in how drama is experienced, it would seem to follow this sequence:

1. Responding to drama as an accessible form of play which allows for the use of the body, language, objects in order to represent and express difficult ideas
2. Responding to the content, heightened tension and atmosphere of the dramatic context, particularly in regard to dramas which focus on relationships, dilemmas and choices
3. Responding to the aesthetic of the drama: to the possibilities of drama as a textual form which can be crafted to express complex ideas.

4.2. The complementary, interactive and mutually reinforcing quality of drama and writing

At the end of the experiment, students were asked to respond to some statements indicating the degree to which drama and writing had affected each other in an integrated course of study. Several of these statements touch directly on the issue of drama as a context for writing -- writing of the sort that is impersonal, in that the writer is in role. Students' responses indicate that the lessons did in fact function to provide that motivating context in which impersonal writing could become personal, and a response to students' need for self-expression. Drama provided a context for writing, and for listening.

Table 2: Drama and Writing Survey	Usually %	Sometimes %
1. The drama lesson gave me ideas for writing.	58	27
2. The writing seemed a natural part of the drama activity.	42	40
3. I altered my language because of the role in which I wrote.	23	40
4. Writing in role helped me to express my feelings.	45	34
5. The audience seemed to listen better in drama.	42	42
6. The audience for my writing was in role as I read it.	16	52

In each case, the majority of students -- typically two-thirds or more -- agreed that drama usually or sometimes provided the ideas, context, and audience for writing.

As well, students agreed that the process was reciprocal, in that writing affected the course of the drama. Two-thirds to three-quarters agreed that the writing usually or sometimes "helped me to know what to say in the drama"; "changed the direction of the drama" and "helped me understand the drama better".

These statements suggest that integrated writing and drama are mutually reinforcing, and provide a context in which both activities take on significance, and contribute to language development. As well, in their response to the Writing Practices questionnaire (see Table 1, above), most of the students (80%) indicated that they found the reciprocal nature of drama and writing activities quite evident. When interviewed, students were asked to expand on the quality of this reciprocal relationship. Student responses fell into two categories: those who felt drama was useful to most subjects, not just writing; and those who felt that acting out ideas and characters gave you better ideas for writing.

Both sets of responses point to recognizable learning opportunities offered through the drama programme. The drama work was invariably very practical and accessible in its delivery. The students were physically involved in very concrete activities. They used their bodies, voices, objects, and furniture to help them represent life-like events. These drama activities were planned to provide the students with insight into the theme of the drama which was often abstract and conceptual. Writing is an intensive, introspective and private act (Calkins 1990; Smith, 1981) which requires sophisticated second-order symbolic skills in order to convert the subject of the writing into the written word. By working through practical and concrete activity the students had the chance to make better sense of the writing process and its abstract nature. The drama provided a pathway between raw experience, data and the written word -- raw experience which could be worked on until it became usable as the basis for written language. These students are confirming, as adolescents, the findings of Vygotsky and Piaget about the symbol-transformation quality of play in early years learning.

These findings suggest that it would be valid, useful and important that future Ministry of Education and school board policy statements and curriculum guidelines for English should make reference to drama's value in enhancing attainment in writing, in addition to its accepted value in the development of speaking and listening, and aesthetic growth.

Student Voices

A broader understanding gets built by being in the shoes of other people, and having to think like other people. By learning things in situations that are happening. Most people don't listen when people tell them things. And usually you always learn things the hard way. In a drama, even though you're not learning the hard lesson yourself you're putting yourself in the shoes of someone who's learning the hard lesson. And that makes you think better.

You get to understand how other people feel, and through that you can probably understand what kind of predicament they're in, and maybe help them. If you understand how people feel, you're not likely to make fun of them, you're more likely to help them and sympathize with them.

It's like we're travelling through different places. We get different experiences we wouldn't otherwise have. In this class we get the chance to feel how other people feel.

I think our key to story is to get students involved with feelings. Each of our stories was presented around that, so someone could relate to our story, get involved in the story. Emotion in learning, having feelings in learning is important. If you don't feel about the topic you're not going to work.

Out of the kinds of experiences and feelings we had in drama, we wondered, "How do we change the way things are?" We've started to change things in our school, to be more aware of other people. it's also another way you can build respect, learning what these people have gone through. That's why we want to talk to each other.

4.3 The development of empathy and perspective

Kohlberg (1969, 1971, 1984) showed that role-taking was an essential pre-requisite for moral development. Through the forms of dramatic role-play used during the project young people were being offered a concrete experience of role-taking in order to develop their empathy and understanding for other people - for their dilemmas and moral choices.

The majority of students interviewed commented on having experienced a heightened sense of moral purpose in the writing they did in drama. In other words, they felt that the writing would have a serious and profound effect on the thinking and actions of its audience, as well as on themselves. Many of the writing assignments offered were directly related to the development of the dramas which were also their context. Invariably the content of these dramas, like classical theatre, was related to important areas of human experience, presented in the form of dilemmas, struggles, celebrations, and tough choices to be made.

Through drama, the classes were invited to get personally involved in the lives and stories of imaginary characters who represented the area of human experience covered by the topic they were working on by physically acting out their stories and circumstances. As a result many students experienced a very close sense of association with writing assignments which might otherwise have appeared purposeless and unreal.

For instance, a grade 10 class in role as potential immigrants was asked to write a letter of application to settle in Canada. The class had spent some time building, through drama work, imaginary families from all over the world who might have a reason to want to settle in Canada. They had lived the families' lives in the drama and built their histories. They had also had the chance to find out from an "immigration officer" (the teacher in role) just how difficult it might be to write an effective application. By the time the students came to write they had a very strong investment in getting the letter "right" in terms of its content, its form and its accuracy. But they also had a strong sense of the letter's moral purpose. This was a letter which would, within the drama at least, change lives.

Teacher Voices

The drama topic was "lost and alone," their first experience at being lost, and it was such a significant experience for the kids that the drama around it brought out superior writing. And that's what I was hoping for all along.

It seemed that with my students, one of the things that I found particularly challenging was that they really have trouble talking about their own thoughts and feelings. It's not something that they do easily, or very willingly. I like to think that I have encouraged them to do that and provided an atmosphere that would make them think that it's okay, but its still exceedingly hard. Many of them wear masks, and they hide what's really going on inside. What I've found with writing in role was that feelings came out much more strongly, and most of them were really positive feelings.

What I found with particular students, was that the drama really seemed to kick-start their writing in other areas as well. It seemed to give them the confidence and the liberation so that they would even choose to write when it wasn't mandatory, or time to write. They would just sit and write. One boy in particular wrote as a response to a film in a way that I'd never seem him write before. And I think that the drama really helped him.

Student Voices

Personal Reflections After the Drama

Today we finally finished the letter to Maureen Delaney and we acted her reaction and predicament when she got it. We used a technique called Forum Theatre

It took us three days to write that letter. It's not a very complicated letter, but it is a touchy one, one that required tact. I think the reason it took so long was because of all of our different writing styles and different personalities. We all wanted to say basically the same thing but we all had different ways of saying it. The trick was to compromise.

Many times during the writing of the letter I became frustrated. I wanted to give up and say, "Maybe this wasn't such a good idea." I did not want to admit defeat, and I know this was all part of the process, but it was driving me nuts.

After writing the letter, we acted out how we thought her reaction would be. I thought it was well done. During the scene at the breakfast table, I could feel a lot of tension being released from me. Through the whole letter, I guess, I was just itching to be in a different role.

Then, we did Forum Theatre [in which people can move in and out of player and observer roles]. I've heard of this before, but it was called something else. I really liked Forum Theatre. There were so many different ways of presenting one point. I hope we do more of it.

It is significant that student comments about the "worthiness" of a piece of writing generally relate to argumentative, opinion-giving writing -- letter, articles, statements.

Not to be overlooked are the psycho-social effects and impact of this type of drama work. Stepping into someone else's shoes, sharing new and different perspectives from those usually assumed is also a self-reflective activity and may generate strong reactions from students as they come up against their own false assumptions and prejudices -- often for the first time. Writing is a transformative activity. Drama-driven writing and writing in role afford the opportunity for students to put their responses into the character and then step back and examine that response without excessive risk-taking and the need for heavy defenses to be raised. In this manner drama-related writing provides opportunities for psycho-social growth not available in more traditionally structured writing activities. Socialization is central to the purpose of schooling, a responsibility of school boards and educators and another component of the moral purpose of writing in drama.

The students also commented on the effect that "characterization" work in drama had on their sense of character and voice in their writing. When interviewed, students in all the classes commented on the depth of character they could produce in their writing if the character had previously been "fleshed out" for them through improvisation. Within these improvisations each student had to imaginatively explore and use the gestures and language which they felt were appropriate to their chosen character. As other students responded, through their own characterizations, the student was able to experience how others relate to the character and how her character in turn seems to relate to others. The experience of the improvisation together with reflective discussion provided each student with a broad range of material to include in her own written characterization.

Student Voices

Some people think we better get rid of drama because it's not serving any useful function. But, in drama we learn about kinds of things that happen in life; we learn to see things from different points of view; we learn to be more open minded; we learn about sharing in a group and respecting each other. For some people, it builds their self esteem, they're able to communicate better, and they're more open. A lot of kids who were in the class wouldn't say one word before we began. Now we talk. It builds certain areas of personality.

You get to understand how other people feel, and through that you can probably understand what kind of predicament they're in, and maybe help them. If you understand how other people feel, you're not likely to make fun of them, you're more likely to help them and sympathize with them.

We see things in different perspective. We show one thing then we show it another way. You become more open minded. When we did tableaux, some people would pinpoint one thing, while other people would pinpoint another part, and we'd discuss it.

It's like philosophy in university. You study Socrates and Plato, it's not going to help you build rockets for NASA. It's the same thing, it's for inner peace. It's for the individual.

In the atmosphere we live in we don't really get a chance to express ourselves. Usually we're only close with one group of people in a class, but here [in drama] we get to find out how people feel, different people all the time. When you're in a whole group and you're working that way, when you're talking about feelings and you're sharing ideas, it's a pretty risky thing to do, to talk about your feelings. Usually, if somebody says anything, the whole group will jump on them, but not in drama. Everyone gives their own opinions.

The experience of taking on a character in drama also provided many students with enhanced empathy and understanding for a broad range of people. This in turn allowed them to write sensitively and genuinely from a variety of different points of view. In many of the drama themes used in the project classes, students were invited to take on several roles which often had conflicting values or positions on an issue. Following on from the drama, students had writing assignments which encouraged them to use an unfamiliar voice or present different sides of an argument. Students found this aspect of drama useful to the development of their writing and also commented on drama's usefulness in challenging stereotype and prejudice.

The findings concerning the effect of the drama and writing on students' appreciation of other perspectives suggest strongly that the relationship of drama to other areas of the curriculum, (social studies, family studies, problem-solving/logic, etc.) should be more explicitly identified, with particular reference to: transferable skills; the processes of collaborative learning and symbol making; the exploration of values and the development of empathy and perspective.

4.4 Drama and genre

The intention of the project was to introduce a range of identified genres of writing through the drama work. Drama should offer students planned opportunities to engage with a broad range of writing genres in their work. (These opportunities should be planned so that they enhance the students' drama experience rather than distract from it.) It appears that student writing tended to concentrate on personal and reflective writing. The current emphasis on reflective writing must be broadened to include better representation of impersonal genres of writing. To achieve this, it may be important that professional development for drama (and English) teachers should take into account: the challenges of genre theory; recent developments in linguistics; the importance of the concepts of audience, purpose and context to understanding and making texts (which would include 'drama' as a form of text). As well, assessment of writing ability tasks, including Benchmarks, can be scrutinized in order to ensure that students are provided with a sense of context and purpose for writing in impersonal genres.

Recent developments in linguistics point to a move away from the teaching of Latinate grammar towards a functional metagrammar based on an underpinning structure of audience, purpose and context. This view has found currency in two government commissioned reports in the U.K. (Kingman 1987; Cox 1989) which were influenced by linguists such as M.A.K. Halliday and Katherine Perera. The metagrammar approach suggests that genres of writing possess distinctive conventions which respond to the particularities of context, audience and purpose.

The project revealed a progression of ideas which together give valuable insight into how young writers might be introduced into the particularities, or metagrammar of genre:

- The teachers and students became aware of a broader definition of "script" and "scripting". In performance-oriented drama work, script will tend to refer to the words and actions of the actors which have been written as the first step towards a dramatic performance. Writing for theatre performance is a valuable genre, but it tends to limit students to telling a narrative through dialogue. In this project, the dominant mode of drama work was improvisation, (which was itself often spontaneous, with outcomes negotiated in progress). In this form of work, ideas for writing in non-literary forms constantly suggested

Teacher Voices

Reflective journal writing was the easiest for them to do. When we started to develop new modes of writing, that was a little different, that needed more of an explanation, more teaching. I think going back now, I would spend a lot more time giving them time to write. We only had forty minutes. I would take more time allowing their ideas to formulate. Maybe taking a piece of work and then going back again and saying, "Let's add something to it today," because very often you lose them. I would allow them a lot more time now with their writing. And maybe I felt a little bit pushed to get their writing, to collect it. I would like to allow more group writing.

It's like any other kind of good writing that we do. It takes significant experience to create good writing, and this was their story, rather than my story and my expectations. I think that really made the difference.

themselves -- letters, testimonies, diaries, reports. In order to move their "drama" on, students found themselves "scripting" letters, etc., to contribute to the momentum of the story.

- As a result a wide variety of writing received a very special form of publishing in the form of "scripts" which influenced the direction and quality of the dramatic action. Knowing that a piece was going to be made public in this way motivated students to revise and consider their work in a manner that might otherwise have seemed inappropriate. Due to "going public" in a dramatic context, the students were bringing some of the concerns of "scripting" to their work, i.e., a sense of audience, time place, accuracy, register and dramatic purpose. (Esslin, 1987)

- As the project developed, the teachers understood that they could address elements of the underpinning structure of a piece of writing by representing them, concretely, in the drama. They were able to introduce the audience for a specific piece of writing through role -- the students could talk to the editor of the newspaper before writing a letter to her. Through drama the group could work through consequences and responses to a writer's purpose. In a letter the group was able to act out the mother's response and how the letter might alter her actions.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

It should be remembered that the field work undertaken within this project was of limited scale and duration. However, the detailed attention given to a previously undocumented area of curriculum inquiry has provided sufficient data to warrant closer inspection of the indicators for development and change. The project is timely in the sense that there is evidence to support the view that writing in dramatic contexts may assist students in developing impersonal genres of writing in particular.

The findings of this project should be of interest to teachers of Drama and English, as a basis for discussion and further development of the drama-writing connection.

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